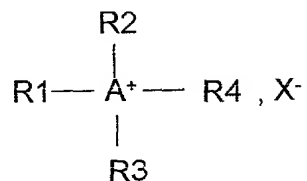


What is claimed is :

1. A compound of the general formula (I) below :

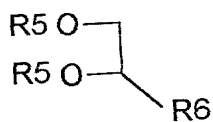
(I)



Wherein A is a phosphorus or an arsenic atom; X^- is an anion; and wherein R1 is selected from the group consisting of :

- a) the radical of formula (II) below :

(II)



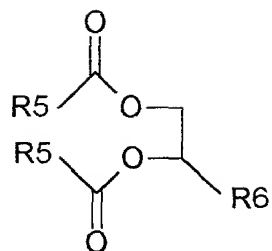
wherein R5 represents a lipid moiety and R6 is a linear or branched alkyl chain from 1 to 4 carbon atoms,

- Provided that R2, R3 and R4 of formula (I) represent each a methyl group;

- b) the radical of formula (III) below :

(III)

5



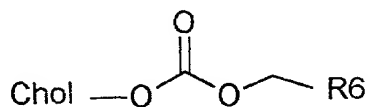
wherein R5 represents a lipid moiety and R6 is a linear or branched alkyl chain from 1 to 4 carbon atoms,

10 provided that R2, R3 and R4 of formula (I) represent each a methyl group;

c) the radical of formula (IV) below :

15

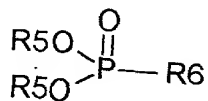
(IV)



20 wherein Chol means a cholesteryl radical and R6 is a linear or branched alkyl chain from 1 to 4 carbon atoms,
provided that R2 and R3 of formula (I) represent each a methyl group;
and

25 d) the radical of formula (V) below :

(V)



30

wherein R5 represents a lipid moiety and R6 is a linear or branched alkyl chain from 1 to 4 carbon atoms,

provided that R2 and R4 are alkyl chains from 1 to 4 carbon atoms; and

5 R3 is selected from the group consisting of:

- an alkyl chain as defined for R2 and R4,
- the functional group $\text{CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-P}^+(\text{R6R7R8})$, wherein R6, R7 and R8 have the same meaning as R2 and R4; and
- $\text{CH}_2\text{-CO}_2\text{R9}$, wherein R9 has the same meaning as R2.

10

2. The compound of claim 1, wherein the anion X is selected from the group consisting of an halide, CF_3SO_3^- , CF_3CO_2^- or HSO_4^-

3. The compound of claim 2, wherein the halide is selected from the group consisting of Cl^- , Br^- and I^- .

4. The compound of claim 1, wherein the R5 lipid moiety is selected from the group consisting of :

- (i) an alkyl or an alkenyl chain containing from 10 to 22 carbon atoms comprising 0, 1 or 2 olefinic double bonds,
- (ii) a cholesteryl derivative
- (iii) a perfluoro alkyl chain from 10 to 22 carbon atoms.

5. The compound of claim 1, wherein the R5 lipid moiety is selected from the group consisting of $\text{C}_{14:0}$, $\text{C}_{18:1}$, $\text{C}_{18:2}$; $\text{C}_{15:0}$, $\text{C}_{17:0}$, $\text{C}_{17:1}$, $\text{C}_{17:2}$, wherein the first number designates the number of carbon atoms and the second number designates the number of double bonds.

6 The compound of claim 1, wherein R1 is of formula V and R2 and R4 represent each independently a radical selected from the group

30

consisting of CH_3 , C_2H_5 , nC_3H_7 , $\text{iso-C}_3\text{H}_7$, with n being an integer equal to 1, 2 or 3

7. The compound of claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V),
5 the R5 lipid moiety consists of an alkyl chain and R6 is a methyl group.

8. The compound of claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V),
the R5 lipid moiety consists of an alkenyl chain and R6 is a methyl group.

10 9. The compound of claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V),
the R5 lipid moiety consists of an alkyl chain and R6 is an ethyl group.

10. The compound of claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V),
the R5 lipid moiety consists of an alkenyl chain and R6 is an ethyl group.

15 11. The compound of claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V),
the R5 lipid moiety consists of an alkyl chain and R6 is a propyl group

12. The compound of claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V),
20 the R5 lipid moiety consists of an alkenyl chain and R6 is a propyl group

13. The compound of claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V),
the R5 lipid moiety consists of a cholesteryl $-\text{[C(O)N-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-O]}$ group
and R6 is an ethyl group.

25 14. The compound of claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V),
the R5 lipid moiety consists of a perfluoroalkyl chain R6 is an ethyl
group.

15. The compound of claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V), the R5 lipid moiety consists of an oleoyl chain ($C_{17}H_{33}C(O)O$) and R6 is a propylen group.

5 16. A compound according to claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V), the R5 lipid moiety consists of an oleyl chain ($C_{18}H_{35}$) and R6 is a -1,2 deoxyglycerol group.

17. The compound of claim 1 wherein R1 has the formula (II), (III) or (V),
10 the R5 lipid moiety consists of a cholesteryl group and R6 is a $[C(O)O-CH_2-CH_2-]$ group.

18. A vesicle comprising the compound according to any one of claims 1
15 to 17.

19. A vesicle consisting essentially of a compound according to any one of claims 1 to 17.

20 20. The vesicle of claim 18, which is a small unilamellar vesicle.

21. The vesicle of claim 18, which is a multilamellar vesicle.

22. A method for introducing *in vitro* a nucleic acid in a cell host
25 comprising the steps of:

a) incubating said nucleic acid with a compound according to any one of claims 1 to 17 to obtain complexes formed between said nucleic acid and said compound; and

b) incubating the cell host with the complexes obtained at step a).

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the compound is under the form of unilamellar vesicles.

24. A method for introducing in vivo a nucleic acid in cells of an host
5 organism comprising the steps of :

a) incubating said nucleic acid with a compound according to any one of claims 1 to 17 to obtain complexes formed between said nucleic acid and said compound; and

b) administering the complexes obtained at step a) to said host
10 organism.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the organism is a mammal.

26. A complex formed between a nucleic acid and a compound
15 according to any one of claims 1 to 17.

27. The complex of claim 26, wherein the nucleic acid comprises a polynucleotide encoding a polypeptide.

28. The complex of claim 26, wherein the nucleic acid comprises a
20 polynucleotide which encodes an antisense polynucleotide.

29. The complex of claim 26, wherein the polynucleotide encoding a polypeptide is operably linked to a regulatory sequence.
25

30. A composition comprising a complex according to any one of claims 26 to 29.

31. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a complex according to
30 any one of claims 26 to 29.